

*A Forgotten City.*—By J. F. FANTHOMÉ.

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History makes mention of many cities, only the names of which have survived through the lapse of ages, but their sites are unknown. Madāin, the capital of the celebrated Nūshēr wān, is one. By some it is identified with the modern Hamadān in Persia, by others as the present Qandahār in Afghanistan; others again trace it to a town of a similar name which Sale, the translator of the Qurān, places in the south of Arabia, and calls it Madiān. The exact geography or location of the city is therefore unknown.

That these cities which flourished for indefinite periods, should have perished leaving scarcely any memorial of themselves upon the records of time, is hardly to be credited than that a city founded by a powerful monarch for his pleasure should have come into existence, flourished, decayed, and swept off the earth as it were, within the short space of three decades, is a phenomenon in history which cannot fail to strike the imagination or to point the moral in regard to the transitory nature of things human. Such a city, however, sprung up during the early days of the great Akbar's reign, and ended its brief duration even before that monarch had closed his by-no-means short reign of fifty-one years. I refer to the town of NAGARCAIN, a name not to be found, as far as I am aware, in contemporary annals except two, nor in any of the chronicles of the subsequent period of Mughal domination.

After Akbar had been seated on the throne nine years, his historian informs us, he caused a city to be built within easy distance of his capital, Agra, upon a plain which lies due south of the present city of that name. This city which he named Nagarcaïn, he intended for a resting-place, as the name imports, or a "camping-ground" for the Imperial cavalcade. To it he retired frequently for "rest"—for recreation from the cares of Government—and spent the time in hunting and hawking, in playing *caugān* or polo, and in witnessing races and

other games, to relieve and divert his mind. It was, in short, if we may so term it, a hunting-seat, or, what in Europe would perhaps be called, a villa or country-seat; but something more pretentious than the villas at Rupbās or Bārī still extant. It seems nevertheless to have been a place of greater magnitude than a villa, for it rose in a very short time to be a city, which derived its importance and its magnificence from the occasional residence in its midst of the Court of one of the greatest potentates the world has seen.

The Royal wish having been expressed, palaces and baths and temples and mansions, and other handsome edifices soon came out of the builders' hands. The courtiers, encouraged thereto, followed suit, and within a very short time a city rose, excelling in the number of its inhabitants, and in the gorgeousness of its public and private edifices most of the Indian capitals of the present day; for though the extent or the dimensions of the inhabited site are not given, it is safe to assume that it was in every respect equal to the requirements of a magnificent Court, the pomp and pageantry of its appointments, and the vast multitudes of followers that usually formed the camps of the Mughal Emperors, as we find recorded in other places; not to mention the calls, public business, manufactures, commerce, and curiosity, and travel make upon space and surroundings.

Akbar ascended the throne in the year 1556 A.D. Nagarcain was therefore founded in the year 1565; but when Badāyūnī wrote his "History," to which a date may be assigned prior to the conclusion of the reign in 1605, Nagarcain had already ceased to be a city: *not a trace of it was left.* The fact is almost incredible, but I take it as I find it recorded in the pages of one whose comments upon the events of this reign were not always favourable.

I shall now proceed to quote from Abul Fazl's Akbarnāma in support of my description; the translation is mine.

"To relate the event of the founding of Nagarcain is to gain the prize (*caugān*) of pleasure with the aid of good fortune. The Constructor of the great wonders of creation and the Wise Designer of the grand edifices of the variegated world has determined with His perfect foreknowledge and infinite power that the being of His Majesty shall every moment prove the means of demonstrating the celestial arts, and that in every place His Majesty's ideas of beauty may be adopted as a correct exemplar for the decoration of cities. Hence His Majesty turned his attention—the beautifier of the world—to adorn and embellish the village of Kalakrālī. The whole area of this village, from the purity of its climate and the luxuriance of the soil, and its plains, is by contrast much to be preferred to any other land of pleasantness;

and it lies at the distance of one *farsang* from the capital of Agra. During these days it so happened, whenever the exalted retinue proceeded from the city to the open country for the purpose of recreation or sport, His Majesty's mind, spotless in its conceptions, was frequently attracted to that alluring region; and there among the inspiring green swards, freed from care, the carpet of sport being spread, he indulged in hunting the wild animals or snaring the feathered tribes. At this period, while the banners of good fortune were returned from their excursion through the tracts of Mandū and were established at the seat of empire, the artificer of lofty resolutions expressed his will that soul-stirring edifices and life-nourishing gardens shall be built upon that wealth-promoting plain. Accordingly, at the auspicious moment and under lucky influences, harmonising with the aspirations of pleasure and delight, the designers with the magical compasses and the builders with enchanting ideals laid the foundations of charming mansions and beautiful structures such as might serve to encase therein the spirits of desire; and within a short space of time the builders with nimble hands and the artificers possessing active ability finished the construction in accordance with the ideas inscribed deeply in the picture gallery of His Majesty's enlightened mind. Likewise, the Ministers of the State and the Pillars of the Empire, as well as the whole body of officials of the sublime threshold, made mansions and gardens to the extent of their means and in accordance with the respective positions they occupied, and indulged in the enjoyment of them. And so, within the time appointed, that inhabited spot spread its luxuriance to such a degree that it might have been considered as a (black) mole upon the cheek of all the cities of the Universe. And the great Emperor gave to that flourishing settlement, to that freshly-produced fruit of Paradise, the name of Nagarcain; that is, the place of ease and comfort. And before that time His Majesty used (in the same place) to carry off (victoriously) the prize of pleasure from Fortune, and to pay the dues of sensibility, delight and gratification in the indulgence of sport and recreation."

The next quotation which I shall give is from 'Abdul Qādir Badāyūnī's *Muntakhaib-ut-tawārīkh*, the perusal of which indeed has led me to make these remarks:—

"In this year the building of the city of Nagarcain took place. On this subject one of the nobles, at the time of the composition of the Akbār-nāma, ordered me to compose some lines which I here insert without alteration. 'When the Architect of the workshop of invention through the promptings of original genius, suggested to the lofty thoughts of the absolute monarch who is the builder of the metropolis of the

world, and especially the artificer of the shrine of Hind, that, in accordance with (the verse) :

“The world-upholder, the world to hold, doth know, one place to uproot, and then another sow” : he should make resting-places for the glorious Imperial cavalcade, by graciously building at every stage, and on every clod of soil, where the air of the place was temperate, its fields extensive, its water sweet, and its plains were level—and what choice was there ! for cool spots, and pleasant dwellings, and fragrant resting-places, and sweet waters, with a view to preservation of the gift of bodily health, and with a view to the possibility of an evenly-balanced condition of the soul, all of which may possibly be conducive to the knowledge and service of God, are of the number of the six necessaries of existence, and especially at a time when some of the royal occupations, such as exercise and hunting, were therein involved—for these reasons, in the year of happy augury, after his return from his journey to Mālwa, when the friends of the empire were victorious, and the enemies of the kingdom had been disappointed, before the eyes of a genius lofty in its aims, and the decision of a mind world-adorning it befell, that, when he had made a place called Ghrāwalī (which is one *farsang* distant from Agra, and in respect of the excellence of its water, and the pleasantness of its air, has over a host of places a superiority and a perfect excellence) the camping-place of his Imperial host, and the encampment of his ever-enduring prosperity, and when he had gained repose for his heaven-inspired mind from the annoyances incidental to city-life, he spent his felicity-marked moments, sometimes in *caugān*-playing, sometimes in racing Arabian dogs, and sometimes in flying birds of various kinds ; and accepting the building of that city of deep foundations as an omen of the duration of the edifice of the palace of his undecaying Sultanate, and as a presage of the increase of his pomp and state, his all-penetrating firmān was so gloriously executed that all who obtained the favour of being near to his resting-place, and were deemed worthy of the sight of his benvolence, one and all built for themselves in that happy place lofty dwellings and spacious habitations, and in a short time the plain of that pleasant valley under the ray of the favour of His Highness, the adumbration of the Divinity, became the mole in the cheek of the new bride of the world, and received the name of Nagarchīn which is the Hindustani for the Persian Amnābād, security-abode :—Praise be to God, that picture, which the heart desired issued from the invisible behind the curtain of felicity.

It is one of the traditional wonders of the world that of that city and edifice not a trace now is left, so that its site is become a level

plain." Well may the writer philosophize at the conclusion. "Profit then by this example ye who are men of insight!" as the author of the *Qārūns* has said: "Of seven or eight cities, called Mancūrah or Mancūriyyāh, built by a mighty king, or monarch of pomp in their time, at this time not one is inhabited. Will they not journey through the land, and observe what has been the end of those who were before them?" "(From Mr. W. H. Lowe's translation vol. II, p. 68, edition of 1884.)

I have known Persian scholars besides Mr. Lowe to read the name as Nagarcain, that is, the town of the Cinī or Chinese; but the more correct reading is Nagarcain, that is, the town or abode of rest. Another name by which as we see it was called was Amnābād, which means also the same thing, namely, a place of relaxation or the city of rest; but Akbar was no pedant, he did not affect high Persian and so the more *Hindianized* name was adopted. The ruins of the city lie in an extensive plain seven miles due south from Agra in the vicinity of the village of Kakrālī, within the boundaries of the village of Qabūlpur, which is conterminous with Kakrālī. They consist of a place locally known as the Mahal Mandū; a plot measuring 2 biswās (9 p.) called Masjid, but there is no *masjid* there now; another plot of 2 biswās also called Masjid, the ruins of a *masjid* being extant; a hammām or bath covering 2 biswās; and a large well. All these edifices are in a state of perfect dilapidation. The whole tract is *nazul* or Government property; 6 bighas (a: 3. 1. 17.) of it is cultivated and is let for Rs. 23 a year, but nobody knows it as the site of an ancient city; the village records speak of it merely as Mahal Mandū.

The distance of Kakrālī from Agra Fort is seven miles, while both Abul Fazl and Badāyūnī describe Nagarcain as situated at a distance of only one *farsang* from the metropolis. And therefore it might perhaps be objected that the village which I identify as the site of my 'forgotten city' cannot be the Kalakrālī of Abul Fazl or the Ghrāwalī of Badāyūnī. The explanation which I have to offer is not a far-fetched one. Now a *farsang* is equal to three geographical miles. The suburbs of Agra at that period extended as far as Kakūbā, which is a town situated some four or five miles from the Agra Fort, and so Nagarcain would be no farther than one *farsang* or three miles from the uttermost border of the capital.

The name is another difficulty but only an apparent one. Kakrālī is the present name of the village, and very probably it was so then also. But in the editions which I have seen, namely, Nawal-Kishor's, the name is written as Kalakrālī or Kalkarālī, in the Akbar-nāma, and as Kakraulī or Ghrāwalī, in Badāyūnī.

All these wrong spellings are presumably due to clerical errors. Accepting that both these authors are speaking of the one identical town as Kalakarāli or Kalkarāli or as Kakrauli or Ghrāwali, it is by no means an unfair inference to draw that the present Kakrāli is really the place meant; for it is quite possible in the Persian character, if written loosely, to mistake the one for the other.

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